

February 13, 1976

Dr. Eldon Sutton
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Dear Eldon,

We have been very pleased with your book, "An Introduction to Human Genetics", and are using it in our (elementary) medical genetics course.

I also used your Chapter 5 in my course on "Health" and I have to say that I found page 479 (which I guess follows Swenson in NYAS 1970) to illustrate a common fallacy in cost-benefit analysis. Namely, you compare a 30 year cost stream totalling \$150,000 with an investment of \$20,000 per Downs found. But the present value of that 30 year stream, discounted at say 6% is only \$70,000. So it is still a good bargain (if anyone doubted it!) - but one should be careful not to exaggerate.

I think the (possible) residual risk of amniocentesis has to be counted as much as the cost in trying to decide on a reasonable cutoff age for the marginal benefit; and of course, this also fluctuates with each family's special perception about the prospective child.

I was sure you would welcome this comment, and I wish you many successful editions.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr

cf Benwick reply